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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP MACDONALD AND PM/WRA SPICO AND
SCOSTNER

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TAGS: PARM PREL PTER MASS YM
SUBJECT: (S/NF) ROYG DESTROYS BLACK MARKET MANPADS

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen Seche for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) SUMMARY. On July 27, PolOffs verified the destruction of 102 MANPADS acquired from the Yemeni black market by the National Security Bureau (NSB). This brings the total number of black market MANPADS destroyed through US-ROYG cooperation to 1,263. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

¶2. (S/NF) Yemen is a critical source of MANPADS proliferation. Years of uncontrolled weapons imports and the chaos of the 1994 civil war made MANPADS widely available on the illicit arms market in Yemen. (Note: MANPADS that were used in al-Qaeda (AQ) operations in Kenya, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen in 2001 and 2002 were traced to official Yemeni stocks.

End Note.) In 2003, the National Security Bureau (NSB) began collecting MANPADS from weapons souks throughout the country. In 2004, the U.S. Department of State (DOS) and the ROYG signed a bilateral grant agreement on the joint implementation of a program to eliminate MANPADS from the Yemeni black market. As a result of this program, 1,161 MANPADS were destroyed in February 2005.

¶3. (S/NF) Ongoing US-ROYG cooperation has since resulted in the NSB's acquisition of an additional 102 MANPADS, 40 gripstocks, and 51 batteries. After the February 2005 destruction, 35 MANPADS were collected and disabled during that year. For the following three years, less than a dozen MANPADS were acquired each year. However, after the USG agreed in July 2008 to increase the price for black market MANPADS, the NSB was able to acquire 41 black market MANPADS in less than a year, bringing the total acquired since February 2005 to 102. Most of the 102 MANPADS are SA-7s and SA-14s, with two SA-16s.

DESTRUCTION DAY

¶4. (S/NF) On July 27, PolOffs traveled to a military base in Wadi Halhalan (Ma'rib governorate) to observe the MANPADS destruction. They were accompanied by NSB Deputy Director Ammar Saleh and NSB official Colonel Akram al-Qassmi, the main points of contact on the MANPADS acquisition and destruction program. Prior to PolOffs' arrival, EOD technicians from the Yemeni Mine Action Center (YEMAC) had arranged the missiles with explosives in two separate pits. PolOffs verified that each pit contained exactly 51 missiles, for a total of 102. PolOffs photographed the missiles in both pits; from the photos it can be confirmed that each pit contains 51 missiles. Because the MANPADS had already been stacked and covered with explosives, serial numbers were

visible on only a few of the upper-most missiles. PolOffs confirmed that three of the visible serial numbers coincided with those of missiles previously viewed and disabled by EmbOffs. Qassmi presented a complete list of serial numbers corresponding to the MANPADS contained in the pit, which PolOff signed. PolOffs then drove across the plain to a makeshift tent, from where they observed the destruction. The MANPADS were destroyed in two consecutive explosions that were detonated at approximately 12:45 hours. PolOffs took videos of the explosions as further verification.

COMMENT

¶5. (S/NF) U.S. officials have been pressing the ROYG for several years to destroy the black market MANPADS acquired since February 2005. USG delays in transferring funds to the ROYG for disabled missiles caused some frustration among NSB officials. The fact that the destruction finally took place, however, eliminated those frustrations, renewed goodwill between the parties, and bodes well for further US-ROYG cooperation on MANPADS threat reduction. END COMMENT.

SECHE